

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Extended Study Session

March 9, 2009
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room 1E-113
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger, Deputy Mayor Balducci, and Councilmembers Davidson, Lee, and Noble

ABSENT: Councilmembers Bonincontri and Chelminiak

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Balducci called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm., and announced recess to Executive Session for approximately 10 minutes to address two items of potential litigation.

The meeting resumed at 6:10 p.m., with Mayor Degginger presiding.

2. Oral Communications

- (a) Bill Hirt expressed his concerns regarding the Sound Transit East Link light rail plan, and submitted his comments in writing. He accused the Council of nonfeasance for their failure to do what duty requires for their constituents. If the Council allows the implementation of light rail through Bellevue, it needlessly condones future environmental damage from construction and operation of the light rail system. Mr. Hirt said that the East Link draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) failed to analyze a no build alternative utilizing greatly increased bus service with two-way bus lanes on the I-90 bridge.
- (b) Ian Elliott, a Bellevue resident, requested a small skate facility in Ashwood Park near the downtown library. He thanked the Council for its previous support of skate parks.
- (c) Ali Biria, Skyline Properties, expressed concern regarding the proposed light rail system and its impact on retail businesses, especially in the area of 106th Avenue NE and Main Street. He suggested that the Council take more time in considering Sound Transit's options for the downtown, noting that the project could have serious consequences for local businesses.

3. Study Session

(a) Council Business and New Initiatives

No new initiatives were discussed.

(b) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit Update

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened staff's update on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit process. The permit authorizes the City to discharge stormwater into the public waterways and requires annual reporting.

Phyllis Varner, NPDES Coordinator, described the Utilities Department's implementation of Bellevue's permit, which affects all City departments and municipal actions that can affect stormwater quality. Council action will be requested on March 16 to meet the Department of Ecology's March 31 deadline for submittal of the 2009 Stormwater Management Report and 2008 Compliance Report.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, Ms. Varner said Bellevue's classification as a Phase II community under the NPDES program will not change unless the Federal Clean Water Act is revised. However, the DOE's intent as permit authority is that Phase II communities will eventually have to comply with conditions similar to those required by Phase I Permits.

Councilmember Davidson observed that while NPDES is a national program, the DOE as the state administrative agency has the right to impose more stringent regulations. The only challenge available is at the court level or through a review appeal process.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Ms. Varner confirmed that the new permit requires the City to conduct a significantly increased number of inspections and reports.

Deputy Mayor Balducci stated her understanding that staff will be coming back with proposed changes to the City Code that are related to NPDES requirements. She asked that staff work with each inspection function within the City to streamline the permit process for the public.

(c) Eastgate Area Properties Master Plan Review

City Manager Sarkozy opened staff's presentation of the Eastgate Area Properties Park Master Plan. A portion of the 27.5-acre former landfill and airfield site was purchased from The Boeing Company several years ago. It represents one of the larger undeveloped park sites available within the community.

Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran noted that the Eastgate properties is one of several sites for which master planning is currently underway. Staff is seeking Council direction tonight regarding the desired components of the Eastgate park site.

Glenn Kost, Parks Planning Manager, provided a brief history of the site. The key issues for tonight's discussion are the: 1) Desired hierarchy of recreational uses (i.e., sportsfields, recreational building, off-leash areas, and preservation of the meadow), 2) Details regarding sportsfields (i.e., how many, whether fields should be designed for single or multiple sports, and lighting), and 3) Development of picnic areas.

The Eastgate property is located east of 156th Avenue SE, south of SE 26th, and north of the Embassy Suites Hotel. Mr. Kost said this is perhaps the last large property capable of supporting a wide range of park facilities and activities. It is easily accessible and contains significant natural area buffers to the neighborhoods.

Mr. Kost explained that the master planning process establishes a shared long-range vision and development plan incorporating phased implementation and planning level cost estimates. Upon receiving Council direction tonight, staff will prepare its recommended park Master Plan, which will be followed by the fourth community meeting and further revisions to the plan as needed. The Parks and Community Services Board will ultimately review the plan and develop its recommendation for the City Council.

Mr. Kost said community outreach activities have included workshops, a neighborhood meeting, a citizen petition, online surveys, and email and phone communications. Community feedback indicates a preference for walking trails, athletic fields, off-leash dog area, aquatic facility, playground, picnic facilities, and the preservation of passive open space (e.g., the meadow). The multiple-use options (B and D) generated fewer objections from residents than the single-purpose alternatives (C and E). There is general support for an indoor recreation building and for avoiding active uses in natural areas. Areas receiving the highest level of agreement among residents are picnic facilities, children's play areas, enhanced trails and connections, limited vehicle access to 160th, the use of existing parking if possible, residential buffers, and environmental responsibility in developing the park.

The design alternatives were narrowed to three before the third workshop, all of which currently remain under consideration. The original single-purpose options were eliminated, and the remaining alternatives were modified. Mr. Kost explained that a key master plan issue is the usage of the park's large open area. Potential uses include sportsfields, off-leash dog facilities, an indoor recreation building, and/or preservation of the woods and meadow.

Mr. Kost described the regional demand for sportsfields covering a wide range of sports. Key concerns for the City include noise, traffic and lighting impacts. Advocates of sportsfields cite the need for better quality fields in Bellevue and the potential economic benefits associated with facilities that can accommodate tournaments. Mr. Kost briefly reviewed recent sportsfields projects since 2003, as well as projects planned for Newport Hills Park (2010), Wilburton Community Park (2010), and Surrey Downs Community Park (2013). He noted that current usage ratios indicate that Bellevue has the fewest number of fields per participant in the areas of women's softball, Little League, and soccer/lacrosse.

Residents in favor of an off-leash dog area point to this historical neighborhood use of the site. They note that dog owners are not well served and that the nearby facility at Robinswood Park is not adequate. Mr. Kost said that dogs on leashes are currently welcome at all city parks, with the exceptions of beach parks in the summer and synthetic surfaces. Off-leash dogs represent the top complaint issue for the Parks Department every year.

Mr. Kost noted that in addition to Bellevue's off-leash area at Robinswood Park, there are three public facilities nearby at Marymoor Park, Luther Burbank Park, and Medina Park. Staff will present the results of an off-leash study to the Parks and Community Services Board on March 10. This includes staff's recommendation for improvements to the off-leash area at Robinswood Park as well as the addition of two to four small off-leash facilities throughout the community.

Moving on, Mr. Kost said the City has been approached over the years by a number of organizations interested in creating an indoor recreational facility for indoor soccer, indoor baseball practice, ice skating/hockey, and basketball. Some have proposed public-private partnerships. In recent years, SPLASH has been a major advocate for a large indoor aquatic facility. Based on this history, staff identified a placeholder in the master plan for a 40,000-50,000 square foot facility. Mr. Kost briefly reviewed staff's concept for a mid-range indoor aquatic center, which would consume the majority of the park's open area.

Mr. Kost said a number of residents want to preserve the property's large open space as a natural area. He noted that 37 percent of Bellevue is covered by the tree canopy, and 80 percent of the City's park and open space system consists of natural areas.

Mr. Kost reviewed the three master plan alternatives. Option A represents the most passive development with no formal athletic fields, open playfields, and preservation of a portion of the tall grass meadow. It includes an indoor recreation building and picnic facilities in the wooded area.

Option B is the most active alternative, containing a lighted multi-sports complex (Little League fields and soccer fields) with synthetic turf. It includes a two-acre off-leash facility and a more extensive formal picnic area. Option C is a combination of options A & B and includes a smaller number of ballfields, preservation of the tall grass meadow, indoor recreation facility, and off-leash area. Picnic tables would be located along the trails in the wooded areas.

Mr. Kost explained that all three alternatives have trails and picnic tables. However, only options A and B have picnic shelters. Options A and C have indoor recreation buildings, B and C have off-leash facilities; and B and C have sports fields. The Parks and Community Services Board reviewed the three options last month and favored Option B along with the inclusion of a recreation building in the location identified for Option C. However, the Board has not yet made its formal recommendation for the Council.

Merle Keeney commented that the Parks and Community Services Board sees this large property as a rare opportunity to provide a number of functions that will benefit the overall community. The Board is interested in maximizing the utilization of this site.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Kost said that a major limitation associated with the indoor recreation facility (40,000-50,000 square feet) is parking. As a result, the facility would support local but not regional events.

Mr. Foran said the South Bellevue Community Center is a multi-use sports and programming facility of about 35,000 square feet. If the building was dedicated solely to one indoor sports activity, it would be substantially larger. Staff's preference is to design facilities for multiple sports in order to achieve the maximum benefits of a site.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Balducci, Mr. Kost said the new park (27.5 acres) is slightly smaller than Robinswood Park (30+ acres). For comparison purposes, Downtown Park is approximately 20 acres.

Deputy Mayor Balducci noted the City's efforts to provide park facilities serving a wide range of uses. Community organizations have lobbied for more sportsfields for many years, and the Eastgate property has been cited as favorable for fields because it is large and relatively flat. Ms. Balducci expressed support for off-leash dog areas and an interest in the recent off-leash study. She feels that the Eastgate property is a good opportunity for providing a number of amenities for the community. She noted the importance of managing neighborhood impacts and maintaining the feeling of seclusion on the park property.

Councilmember Lee expressed support for active sportsfields and an indoor facility. Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Foran commented that lighted sportsfields are a way to maximize the usage of a park facility.

Councilmember Noble prefers to wait to hear the Park Board's recommendation before providing Council direction. However, he recalled that early discussions about the site focused on developing an active park with outdoor sportsfields as one component. He encouraged picnic areas accessible to the elderly and others with limited mobility. Mr. Noble feels the site lends itself to park development with minimal neighborhood impacts.

Mayor Degginger concurred with the original vision for active park uses at the time the property was purchased. He supports the development of sportsfields during the first project phase. However, more study and discussion is needed to determine the feasibility of a large indoor recreation facility. Mayor Degginger commented that sportsfields at both this location and Robinswood Park could provide a good opportunity for sports/soccer tournaments.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Balducci, Mr. Foran said the draft feasibility study for an aquatic center has been completed, and staff will present it to the Council as its schedule allows.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Kost said the off-leash study includes staff's recommendation that the Robinswood Park off-leash facility be improved before considering an off-leash area at the new park.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Kost said smaller off-leash areas could be located at Downtown Park and perhaps in South Bellevue. Mr. Foran noted the rationale that the new Eastgate park property provides the opportunity for facilities that do not currently exist and/or require large areas (e.g., sportsfields), while off-leash dog areas can likely be integrated into some existing parks.

Mayor Degginger noted Council support for athletic facilities as a primary feature of the Eastgate park, as well as general interest in picnic facilities, the potential for an indoor recreation building, and the results of the off-leash areas study.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Kost said the access path to the Eastgate property loop trail currently crosses the Boeing property. The City is working to obtain formal public access.

(d) Surrey Downs Park Master Plan and Building Zone

Mr. Foran recalled that the Surrey Downs Master Plan was previously presented to the Council on May 19, 2008. Council action to adopt the plan is tentatively scheduled for March 16.

Mr. Kost reviewed public involvement throughout the planning process including three community workshops, online information and questionnaire, and participation of community groups including the Bellevue Boys and Girls Club. The Park Board recommended approval of the Master Plan on May 13, 2008, and environmental review and analysis have been completed. Themes that emerged throughout the public planning process were no net loss in athletic fields, a diversity of park elements and activities, and that a community center would be an appropriate use in the Surrey Downs Park if properly scaled.

Mr. Kost said the building's size and height were not determined. However, there was agreement that the center should provide multi-generational uses and should not compromise other desired park features.

Mr. Kost briefly reviewed the proposed Master Plan, including three potential options for the development of a community center facility.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Kost said the Boys and Girls Club is interested in a 45,000 square foot facility on the site. Mr. Foran said this option would require a parking structure.

Mr. Kost described the proposed sportsfield reconfiguration, which recommends larger baseball/softball fields and a larger soccer field for age 12 and under that could be split into two fields for age 8 and under. He explained that the distance between the SE ballfield home plate and the south property line is currently 190 feet. In the initial concept plan for the park the distance was 70 feet. The recommended Master Plan reflecting the reconfiguration of the fields adjusts this distance to 110 feet.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Kost confirmed that the plan includes landscape buffers between the park and residential areas. Mr. Foran said the plan incorporates view and noise screening as well as measures to prevent sports balls from hitting building structures.

Mr. Kost responded to questions of clarification from Councilmember Lee regarding the size of the ballfields and the age groups that will be using them. Mr. Kost said there is an ongoing demand for Little League (age 12 and under) fields.

Deputy Mayor Balducci said she is pleased with the plan and its ability to meet the desires and needs of the community. She noted her concern regarding potential parking impacts, and asked staff to work with neighbors to implement the visual and sound screening.

Responding to Ms. Balducci, Mr. Kost explained that adoption of the Master Plan will also involve adoption of written parameters that will govern the future use of the development zone portion of the site (i.e., community center component).

Referring to a letter to the Council from Surrey Downs residents, Mr. Kost said that some of the comments in the letter pertain to an earlier plan and not to the Master Plan to be presented for Council adoption.

Councilmember Davidson concurred with Deputy Mayor Balducci's comments regarding the mitigation of neighborhood impacts and parking issues.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, a member of the Surrey Downs park committee clarified that comments in the recent Surrey Downs letter refer to the new plan and the distance of 110 feet between the SE ballfield home plate and the south property line.

Mayor Degginger recalled a similar issue with the ballfields at Lewis Creek Park, which was resolved through on-site design and plantings.

Mayor Degginger noted general Council support for the Master Plan.

At 8:04 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared a short break. The meeting reconvened at 8:09 p.m.

(e) Report on the Development of the 2009-2010 Human Services Needs Update

Mr. Foran opened staff's presentation regarding the development of the 2009-2010 Human Services Needs Update. He noted that the economic downturn will likely refocus some needs and priorities within the community. The results of the 2009-2010 Update will guide funding allocations for 2011 and 2012.

Alex O'Reilly, Human Services Planning Coordinator, reviewed the many sources of information used for the Human Services Needs Update including a random phone survey of Bellevue residents, census data, surveys of service providers and faith groups, consumer surveys, and community focus groups. Proposed budget cuts to address the State budget deficit are

expected to have significant impacts on human services organizations. Service providers and organizations are also experiencing reduced donations due to the current economy.

Barbara Tuininga, Program Coordinator, reported that the Crossroads Mini City Hall is experiencing an increase in requests for assistance from residents. Food bank distribution at this location has doubled, and many of the citizens now asking for help have never previously needed assistance. For example, their income might be significantly lower because they have lost their jobs. However, even though they are unable to pay existing bills, their income is not low enough to qualify for many or most assistance programs.

Mr. Foran said internal discussions have been initiated within the City's Leadership Team regarding these issues and the appropriate role for the City along with community partners.

Councilmember Lee commented on the role of the religious community in providing human and social services.

Councilmember Noble suggested that perhaps some solutions can be found in the research of communities that have dealt with similarly challenging economic circumstances.

Mayor Degginger asked that Councilmembers Davidson and Lee talk with other jurisdictions about these issues, as well as possible solutions and strategies, while attending the National League of Cities (NLC) conference next week.

Councilmember Lee spoke to the need for an ongoing endowment to provide human services infrastructure funding.

Councilmember Davidson suggested that the current dire economic situation could justify the use of the City's Rainy Day fund.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Sarkozy said approximately \$3 million has been cut from the City's budget, and staff will continue to identify additional reductions. He noted monies in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and within other reserve funds that could be used to address immediate economic challenges.

(f) A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH)

(1) 2008 Housing Trust Fund Allocation for the YWCA Family Village at Issaquah Highlands

Arthur Sullivan, Program Manager for A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH), described the request for a 2008 Housing Trust Fund allocation for the YWCA Family Village at Issaquah Highlands. The first phase of the project provides 97 housing units ranging in size and affordability, as well as a child care facility and community meeting space. Council action on this \$300,000 funding allocation is requested on March 16.

(2) 2009 Work Program and Administrative Budget

Mr. Sullivan referred Council to the 2009 ARCH work program and administrative budget provided in the meeting packet. He explained that ARCH staff will be talking with the ARCH Executive Board this week about foreclosures, and about how this region compares to the rest of the country in this regard. He recalled that ARCH began providing a down payment assistance program approximately five years ago after recognizing the need within the region. ARCH continues to explore opportunities for expanding assistance to residents including a current effort to consolidate access to information from multiple jurisdictions via ARCH's web site.

Councilmember Davidson praised ARCH's efforts and accomplishments.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Balducci, Mr. Sullivan said ARCH is working on an annual update for Bellevue and will provide materials to the Council soon.

Mayor Degginger noted that King County's ARCH contribution decreased while most jurisdictions increased their allocations.

At 9:03 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared the meeting adjourned.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

kaw